Saitama Arts Theater and Christopher GREEN (U.K.)
"The Digital Home"
Fourth Report: Reflection
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In this final installment of a total of four reports, I would like to reiterate the purpose of the reports. It is to "share, beyond the framework of the project, the insights and issues that I have come to realize through my participation as an observer, so that they may be used as knowledge for future international co-productions."

Thinking this way, I believe it is appropriate for the final report to be a review of the project as a whole, including a reprint of parts of the past reports, and to summarize "insights and issues related to the project" with regard to points that are not specific to this project but that can be generalized to other projects, rather than the originally designated "responses to the show."

In addition to the "insights and issues related to the project," I believe that it would be beneficial to provide a meta-level summary of "insights and issues related to the process observation itself," as this is an opportunity to do so.

1. Insights and Issues Related to this Project

The following seven points can be identified as insights and issues related to *The Digital Home* Virtual Facility Tour.

(1) COVID-19 Pandemic Turned into a Blessing for Remote Meetings
Given the recent need to prevent the global spread of COVID-19, remote meetings using tools such as Zoom and Webex have rapidly spread throughout the world. This has made it relatively easy to set up multiple meetings with multiple stakeholders across multiple countries and regions, sharing materials, in international co-productions, including this project. This is one of the few positive social effects brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. As such remote meetings will likely become the de facto standard for future international co-productions, it is necessary to consider the nature of international co-productions on this basis.

(2) Absolute Importance of Interpreters
The role of interpreters has always been extremely important in international co-productions, and I felt that their importance has become even more critical with the spread of remote communication. In this project, the same person was in charge of interpretation in most of the meetings. This made it possible for the interpreter to provide background information on each person's comments, which I believe greatly improved communication between the English and Japanese sides. In other words, it would be desirable to establish a system in which a high-level interpreter who is well versed in the art of the field is positioned as a member of the production team and basically participates in all meetings.

(3) Concerns Regarding of the Casualness of Remote Collaboration
The ease with which the frequency of communication can be increased has made international co-productions considerably more casual. Of course, this in itself is a wonderful thing. However, in the past, international co-productions required overseas trips, so a certain amount of careful information gathering and input regarding the culture and artistry of the partner country or region had to be done in advance. By contrast, in the case of remote collaboration, as it is very easy to set up meetings, I am concerned that these preparatory tasks may tend to be neglected. It is necessary to be careful not to become negligent because of the casual nature of remote meetings.

(4) Inherently Different Approaches to *Work*
In international co-productions, one should not assume that "as we're all people, and moreover, the other side are people working in the same field (theater), their way of working should generally be similar to mine." There are cultural differences even in the way professionals in the same field work. In this project, for example, the British director only set the artistic goals for creating the videos for the online version and left the rest to the filmmakers. He did not even write a script. In Japan, however, it is not possible to produce a video without writing a detailed script before commissioning it. In this way, I felt that there were considerable differences in the way professionals work with each other.

(5) Differences in Sense of Time with Respect to Deadlines
The final phase of this project was to add translations to both the Japanese and English content, but this did not proceed according to the time schedule. I surmise that one of the reasons for this was the difference in the concept of "deadlines" between Japan and other countries. In general, it seems that other countries consider Japanese people to be "punctual." For example, when one looks at train accidents caused by speeding in an attempt to be on time, or the overcrowded schedules of the Shinkansen bullet trains, one might think that this may indeed be the case. In international co-productions, it may be better to work on the assumption that people overseas have a different (more relaxed) sense of time than Japanese people.

(6) Need to Cultivate the Ability to Ask Questions
Poet and playwright TERAYAMA Shuji once said, "I want to be a great question." In fact, questions are very important in international co-productions as well. If there are questions about the other side's way of working, it is necessary to clearly communicate the questions (to ask why). At this time, explaining the Japanese side's thinking in a logical manner would help to get the desired answer. In other words, I think that the ability to ask questions such that they clarify "which part of your opinion I feel skeptical about" will be tested in the production process. Unlike when working with other Japanese people in Japan, it is necessary to clarify cultural differences while respecting each other's diversity.

(7) Presenting Cultural Diversity in the Work
Through international co-productions, the artists and staff involved are able to experience the differences in lifestyle and work styles between Japan and their counterparts in other countries and regions. However, it would be a shame to limit this valuable experience to only the small number of people involved. Ideally, the audience should be able to vicariously experience such cultural diversity through the works. I believe that this project revealed the differences between the Japanese and British approaches to aging. It would be wonderful if the audience members themselves come to think about care and control in elder care through such learning.

2. Insights and Issues Related to the Process Observation Itself

In this section, I will provide a meta-level summary of "insights and issues related to the process of observation itself," rather than content

related to individual projects. The reviewer's suggestions are the following two points.

(1) The Number of Reports and the Number of Characters (Words) in the Reports

The core of the request to be a process observer consisted of writing four reports. The timing of these reports was presented in advance as four phases: the process of project launch, rehearsals, presentation of results, and responses to the show. However, when I actually started the work, I felt that these four stages were not well separated and that there were too many.

First of all, regarding the first stage, "process of project launch," a project is actually already launched at the time when the application for a grant is submitted to the Japan Foundation. Therefore, observers can participate only from the stage of concrete meetings.

The next stage is "rehearsals" (in this project, it corresponded to the filming and recording of the videos and the production of the game app), during which various meetings are held regarding the content of the project, and the results are reflected in the actual production (rehearsals).

Moreover, especially since this project is a virtual production, it was not easy to grasp the *responses* in the "responses to the show" stage. That is why this report is written in this manner.

Considering this situation, I believe it would be better to focus on two stages in writing reports: the *process of production* and the *results of the work*.

As for the number of words, it was specified that each report should be "between 4,000 and 6,000 Japanese characters." However, when I sat down at the computer to actually write the reports, I found it quite difficult to write a text of "more than 4,000 characters" because the themes were limited. I think that a sensible number of characters per report would be 2,000 to 3,000.

(2) Viewing of Other Project Works and Exchange of Opinions with Observers

This year there were eight international co-productions followed by observers, including *The Digital Home* Virtual Facility Tour, which I was in charge of. I had already seen *The Cherry Orchard*, a co-production between Shizuoka Performing Arts Center (SPAC) and T2G-Théâtre de Gennevilliers-Centre Dramatique National (France), as I happen to be a member of SPAC's board of trustees. However, I barely even have information about the other six productions.

Under these circumstances, it is unlikely that the symposium (roundtable discussion) in February will deepen the discussion on the insights and challenges of international co-productions beyond the framework of individual works.

It is necessary, I believe, to view not only the work of the international co-production one is in charge of observing, but also other works prior to the symposium. In addition, it is advisable to read the reports of each observer and understand the difficulties and issues behind the production of the works. Without such advance preparation and preliminary study, I am concerned that the symposium will be superficial.

Furthermore, it would have been better if there had been a meeting of the observers at the beginning of this series of projects. Knowing who else had been appointed as observers would have made it easier to understand the backgrounds behind their individual reports when reading them later.

It would also be desirable to hold another (closed-door) informal gathering for discussion with the other observers when the reports from the initial "production process" stage described above have all been submitted. By exchanging views and opinions at this stage, I expect that the observers will be able to approach their own subsequent observations from a more multifaceted perspective.

This process observer system is probably the first attempt of its kind even for the Japan Foundation. I would like to highly commend this itself as an excellent endeavor. I hope that this system will be continued while making further improvements based on the above suggestions.